

THREE DIMENSIONAL APPROACH, By W. Scott Peacock—Pg. 5

The AUTHOR & JOURNALIST

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Mystery Favorite (Mignon G. Eberhart)—Page 3.

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MOSTLY PERSONAL

By JOHN T. BARTLETT, Co-Publisher



John T. Bartlett

Mignon G. Eberhart's recipe for a successful mystery novel has been stated thus: one-half, character study; one-quarter, romance; one-quarter, mystery. Whatever the Eberhart formula, in the author's hands it produces novels which please the public. Not many mystery writers have huge followings. Mrs. Eberhart is one of the elite. Her latest novel, "Wings of Fear" (Random House), which has a Mexico City setting, was published February 19, by March 1 had sold 17,000 copies.

Mignon G. Eberhart was born in Lincoln, Nebraska, and attended, but did not graduate from, Nebraska Wesleyan University. (In 1935 this institution conferred on her an honorary degree.) She married a civil engineer, whose profession shunted the couple here and there about the world. It is said that Mrs. Eberhart turned to writing as a relief from the boredom of travel. It is further said that she chose mysteries because she read they "paid best."

Of the various kinds of novels, the mystery is perhaps the easiest for the beginning writer to sell. Ordinarily, the royalties are modest, or less; "best" is not a word which fits. But though we may smile at the naiveté which prompted Mignon Eberhart to choose mystery writing, the lady certainly has the last laugh. Her first book, published in 1929, "The Patient in Room 18," was immediately successful. All of her books have gone into several printings. Many have been made into motion pictures; serial publication has brought big checks. Like many other established writers, Mrs. Eberhart now lives and writes not far from New York City, in Connecticut.

W. Scott Peacock ("Three Dimensional Approach") is young (30), the editor of several Fiction House magazines (*Jungle Stories*, *Action Stories*, *Northwest Romances*, *Planet Stories*), and the excited father of a new daughter. He is a Kansan who had sold extensively to the pulps before going to New York three years ago. "My ambition," he writes, "is to do some good yarns, edit some fine books, write a Broadway hit in collaboration with my wife."

Contributor notes: R. E. Wolseley is Associate Professor of Journalism at Northwestern University. He has written for magazines of many different kinds (*Coronet*, *American Scholar*, *American Home*, *Christian Century*, and others), and is author or co-author of five books on journalism, most recent of which went into a second printing in March ("Exploring Journalism," Prentice-Hall). . . . A. Boyd Correll wrote "Ten Million Collaborators" for our June, 1943, issue. This month he rounds out the discussion of timeliness which began, with the viewpoints of several editors and one critic, in our March issue. Laguna Beach, California, is his home town.

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. . . Helen Kitchen Branson is also a Californian (Pasadena). . . . Cleve Woods will be remembered for "Who Can Write?" (January, 1945), and "First Things First" (January, 1944.) He was on the staff of the Writers' Workshop, Western State College, last summer.

▲ ▲ ▲

On a recent casualty list was the name of Lt. Bert Stiles, of Denver, killed in action in the European theatre. When the war broke out, Bert had made the *Saturday Evening Post* and other top markets with his short stories, although he was not of voting age. All of us felt that he had a great future ahead of him. He had promised to do an article for A. & J. when the war was over. . . More than is generally realized, professional writers in service will not return to production after the war because, like Bert Stiles, they have made the supreme sacrifice.

▲ ▲ ▲

Every few days I get a letter from some reader who assumes that the National Writers Club is an *Author & Journalist* project; it is not. David Raffellock, A. & J. associate editor for many years, founded the Writers Club independently.

▲ ▲ ▲

Several Oregon subscribers have written me with newspaper clippings covering the arraignment on a fraud count, following a secret indictment of the grand jury, of Stephen A. Janik and Sylvester L. Cross, both of Portland. They pleaded not guilty. On February 23, Judge Fee set April 17 for hearing.

The indictment alleges that Janik and Cross set up, for purposes of defrauding persons desirous of placing popular songs on the market, several music corporations including the Westmore Music Corporation. Continued the *Oregon Journal* report, "The indictment also set forth that in the course of furthering this scheme the defendants issued what they represented to be 'royalties' checks indiscriminately to all persons submitting songs, approximately 30 days following the receipt of the songs, whether the song had been successful commercially or not."

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By W. W. NICHOLS, Editor

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Fiction: Preferred subjects: Romance, Humor, Mystery, Adventure with appeal to both sexes. Unacceptable subjects: conventional "Westerns"; sordid crime stories or those which condone lawbreaking or dishonesty; gruesome war stories; and "fool the reader" stories. Maximum length: 4000 words. Especially desired: good short shorts of 1200 to 1500 words, for which we pay the highest prices in the market—provided we have first look. We use no serials, two-part stories, or novelettes. We buy war background stories but prefer those which deal with the home front.

Articles: Preferred subjects: Personality stories of people whose experiences have been unique, compelling, or inspirational. These may well furnish the article material to tie in with our "Meet America" covers. Community Betterment; Science (non-technical); Entertainment; Unusual Adventures. Preferred length: 1500-2500 words. Especially desired are articles which lend themselves to dramatic pictorial treatment, and pictures should be submitted with manuscripts wherever possible. Ideas for picture stories are also desired. We do not use controversial, historical, or descriptive articles.

True Stories: These are factual narratives told in dramatic, almost fictional style. They may concern courage, heroism, ingenuity or humor in the lives of typical men and women among the armies of the United Nations, behind the lines, and on the home front. The preferred length is 500 words, though it will not matter if they run a little over or under this figure.

Editorials: We regularly publish a pictorial or text feature with a definite inspirational slant, in line with *This Week's* slogan, "For a Better America." In the case of a text feature, the length is about 1000 words. "Preachy" or philosophical editorials should be avoided, but anecdotes, narratives and even true stories may sometimes qualify for this important position in the magazine.

Short Features: These include short articles which lend themselves to photographic treatment; dramatic, unusual anecdotes; 300 word sketches of colorful, unique personalities; articles of 500 to 800 words on all subjects listed above under Articles; and humor of 500 to 800 words. Also cartoons.

General Comment: We do not publish personalities of people who are dead, not even those who have died recently. We seldom publish travel articles, descriptions of places, customs, annual events such as fiestas, etc. We prefer subjects that are national, rather than sectional in interest.

Writers should remember that we schedule the magazine seven weeks ahead of publication. We cannot handle subjects that are extremely active in the news and may be outdated before publication.

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Agnes M. Reeve, Director

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THE AUTHOR & JOURNALIST

April, 1945

THREE DIMENSIONAL APPROACH

. . . By W. SCOTT PEACOCK,
Editor, Fiction House



W. Scott Peacock

Heroes are white, and villains are black, and heroines are pure—and authors are plain fools at times.

I came to that conclusion reluctantly and over a period of years behind an editorial desk at Fiction House. I freelanced for several years before becoming an editor, and knew everything about the writing game. Then I became an editor, and suddenly realized how little I knew about stories, their constructions and their purposes. As

a free-lance, I sold several hundred stories, and today I do not really understand why some of them were paid for and eventually saw print. As an editor, I've rejected the stories of amateurs and professionals, by the hundreds, and I'm fairly certain I know just why they bounced.

I learned something by seeing both sides of the writing game; I had it impressed upon me that stories are pictures of life, but are not photographs—and yet I found that a preponderance of writers treat them as though they were, with but two dimensions, length and breadth.

These authors work hard, sweating out neat little plots, introducing their characters one by one, inserting clever dialogue, nice action, and dramatic conclusions—and see their final results fall flatter than a bride's cakes.

Why?

Because they have no depth.

The plots aren't real; they are a collection of forced situations having little truth about them. The characters are shadows of black and white, slipping over a screen where scenery is accommodatingly changed to background the action. Guns flame, and fists fly, and love blossoms, and problems are conveniently solved—and the readers forget them within a period of hours.

And that isn't as it should be, for the authors are writing of living, and life has depth and rich color and surging emotions. People aren't shadows, and locales are real, and death is the only certainty. Why

then do not these authors give a faithful portrayal of reality to the things of which they write?

I think the reason lies in that they believe writing should use life only as a vague motivating force for their stories, with everything else stemming from their imaginations. They approach their writing with the blind naiveté of a child to whom the world is divided into two categories—good and bad.

As an example, let us use a situation that comes in every mail for *Northwest Romances*.

Our hero is a tenderfoot, a chechako, and his only motivation is the acquiring of wealth. So what! The motivation is so universal it is trite and uninteresting. A girl appeals to him for help, and a villain tells him to keep his nose out of the girl's affairs. So, naturally (?) our hero throws in with the girl, trounces the villain, and he and the girl live happily ever after, sharing the wealth from the gold mine which a crazy old prospector had willed to the girl because she reminded him of his long-lost daughter.

Nuts!

The story is trite in itself; but it also defeats its purpose because of the shallowness of the characters. They have two emotions: love and hate. Self-protection is an instinct, so may be discounted.

These are shadow-people—and are rejected every day from my desk.

They could be sold; but first they would have to be pumped full of life, their minds and hearts laid open for the reader. Thus reader-sympathy could be founded. In short, they would have to be humanized, just as the writer would make more human any friend about whom he spoke.

Their problems would have to be ones of depth, ones which would arouse sympathy or dislike in the reader, thus bringing about a desire to finish the story.

Characterization would do the trick, primarily.

In giving character to protagonists, it must be remembered that a description will not give a clear insight into the workings of their minds. Description serves its purpose by showing neatness, cleanliness, nativity, vanity, snobbishness, and a host of other traits. But a mere description of auburn hair, or rippling muscles, or ragged clothes does nothing

more than describe the *outward* appearance of a protagonist. Description must necessarily be just a part of characterization; yet people change but little when wearing different garments.

True characterization stems from the queer admixture of virtues and faults found within everybody. People are not all good or all bad; it is the clever intermingling of their virtues and faults which gives them solidity and depth, making them strong or weak, heroes or villains. Villains need not be so bad they hate even themselves; they can have good qualities. And by the same token, a hero need not be lily white in all of his actions; for then he becomes saintly, and as such has no place in the stories with which this article deals. And so it follows all characters must have likes and dislikes, for they must follow a life pattern, if they are to be human.

Remember, the writers are giving life to people who have no natural existence of their own. They must be taught to walk, to breath, to experience the emotions which have been a part of the author's life to a more or less degree. They must be *shaded* with the skill of the author's ability, so that each is an individual, so that each stands apart from the others. The writers must try to feel the protagonists' emotions, their "manners" of thinking, and then translate the reactions into words. Unless the writers can become angry, experience happiness, love and hate, or feel sorrow, then they are writing shallowly, and the characters will lack the third dimension—depth.

That last statement is trite, in a way; for many professional authors treat writing as though it were an ordinary job with a schedule to meet. But while they may be craftsmen, and their first enthusiasms are a bit blunted, they still feel the emotions instinctively, and instill that feeling into their characters.

If protagonists must go in a certain direction, and if their reactions are normal, then the stories move naturally, and the readers will easily follow the line of thought. But make the reactions unnatural, and

a normal reluctance upon the readers' part will kill any illusion of reality you may have created.

For example, you might have a sweet little girl laughingly lift an ax and split open the head of her grandmother. Good clean fun—and then she goes to bed and forgets the momentary incident.

Ridiculous? Definitely.

But a clear line of motivations would make such a thing plausible. The difference lies in the shadings of character, of the emotions and repressions and desires of the girl. In other words, the readers must accept the girl's explanation for doing the deed—not condone it, understand, but accept it.

Leigh Brackett, who writes for *Planet Stories*, has that knack. She writes with a powerful sweep of words, digging deep into the minds and hearts of her characters, giving them a reality such as is seldom found in the pulps. Her sympathetic treatment of even minor characters makes her stories outstanding in a field where good imaginative writing is the rule.

Yet with all of the emphasis I place upon characterization, few stories are held up by this alone. Plots must carry them along, setting a pace, drawing scenes, creating the illusions through which the people must move.

Understand that: *through which* they must move.

Plots are not like escalators which carry people from the beginning of a story to the climax. Rather they are like wind gales in which the protagonists are buffeted back and forth until shelter is reached. There must be a conflict between the protagonists, and more subtly, between them and the plot itself.

To explain: A plot is the shaping of the protagonists' lives; and should they be complacent about the manner in which they are shoved about, then they lack the very *characters* which the authors have tried to instill in them. Sometimes this sub-plot is called a "theme," and as such, draws a social theme into a story which primarily is concerned only with the protagonists.

A plot is the conflict or a series of conflicts, for each person must attain a certain end in a story, and to attain such ends there must naturally be conflict of some nature. It is this quality which gives realism and movement to a story, for life is a series of conflicts, and the author is portraying his interpretation of living. These conflicts are intensified or lessened by the characterizations the writer has given the protagonists, by the depths of their emotional reactions to an unnatural situation.

To further extend the thought: plots are situations involving a problem or series of problems. Stories are created when these plots reach a climax where the problem(s) receives a solution. Most problems are universal, with natural exceptions, and basically are simple. Thus it is best for the writer to be as simple in plotting as possible. By this I do not mean trite; I mean the giving of a straight emotional problem which has a basic answer, an answer tempered only by the limitations of the protagonists themselves.

For example, let us use the factual "race to Nome, wherein serum is raced through the wilderness to save many lives in a diphtheria epidemic."

The plot is simple.

Character—Driver hero.

Goal—Nome.

Objective—Saving of strangers' lives.

Hazards—Natural elements, and driver-hero's character.

The true story stems, not from the dash itself, but from the overcoming of the hazards. First are the natural obstacles such as storms, illness, cold, and



"His story must have brought him a pretty good-sized check!"

the like. These have natural limitations, and the problem resolves to one of physical endurance upon the hero's part.

The real story comes from the character of the hero, for in him is success or defeat of the mission. He can be made trite, and merely be driving the sled for money. He can gain realism if, for example, he is a coward, yet braves the wilderness of snow. His problem can be intensified by having some loved one in the doomed settlement, and the hazards greater than any he has ever faced. It can be further heightened by having the loved one ill of the same disease in another direction, his problem being whether to sacrifice this one person for many unknown people, or sacrifice many of them so that one person might be saved.

This sub-plotting can be carried much further, strength coming from the emotional conflict even more than from the physical. In other words, a plot becomes alive only when the problem(s) becomes animate and a part of the protagonists' awareness, rather than a thing apart like a road over which they dutifully walk. In short, a plot gains three dimensions because of the realistic depth of its problems.

A detective murder plot is basically simple: "Find the killer(s)." The plot gains strength from the characters and their reactions to certain unnatural situations, and these situations have a third dimension to them because of the problems brought up when the protagonists move according to the *characters* the author has given each. These problems are brought into focus because of the machinations of the protagonists; and these problems must have depth, each causing a violent reaction upon one or more of the people involved.

Thus, in reality, a plot is the grouping of emotional upheavals created by a situation(s), a story evolving when these upheavals assume a shifting pattern which have a common focal point, i.e., the climax.

All of which, to my mind, justifies the opening sentence of this article. Editors receive and reject stories by the hundreds, wherein shadow-people are presented with two-dimensional problems; and thousands of words are wasted in finding solutions which any thinking person could discover with but a few minutes of ordinary concentration. These authors try to create characters and situations grossly apart from real people and life; and in doing that, they destroy the illusion of reality and sympathy which is absolutely necessary to a story's life.

There are natural taboos, such as the sordid, the controversial, and the filthy, which have no place in the types of writing with which we are concerned. Popular fiction is written for many classes of people, educated and otherwise; and good taste is perhaps the best criterion to follow.

Somewhere are writers who will understand my points, regardless of how badly I have stated them, writers who can see the third-dimensional approach clearly, who can shade their characters so that they are not simply black and white, who can move their characters *through*, and not *over*, a plot, and whose plots have adult problems and adult solutions. I hope some of them read this short piece, and then permit me to read their stories. I would like that, like it very much.

Want to give me a look?

COPYING MATERIAL IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

By ROGER SHERMAN HOAR, M.A., LL.B.

An excellent example of the danger of copying from another author historical material which is "in the public domain" (i.e., material which all the world would be free to copy from the original source) is afforded by the case of *DeAcosta v. Brown et al.*, decided December 13, 1944, by the U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals of the Second Circuit.

The danger lies in the possibility that the supposedly historical material may have been faked by the first author.

In the case in question, Mercedes DeAcosta wrote a biographical screen play on the life of Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross. Realizing the need of love-interest to put the film across, Miss DeAcosta interpolated into Clara Barton's hitherto supposedly austere and loveless life, a romance with an imaginary Tom Maxwell, and to lend plausibility to the interpolation, documented it with a letter full of pathos from Clara's brother to Clara, describing Tom's death in the gold fields of California, and his bequeathing \$10,000 in gold dust to his sweetheart.

In addition to this wholly fictional incident, Miss DeAcosta developed other fictionalized happenings at this same early period of Clara Barton's life, namely: a controversy with the school board in Bordentown, New Jersey, led by the lawyer Elisha Richards more or less as the "heavy" or villain; her leaving Bordentown in consequence; her work as a clerk in the Patent Office in Washington, where she was instrumental in ferreting out misconduct and fraud; and her meeting with former pupils, as soldiers, while she was serving as a Civil War nurse. In fact, Clara Barton did teach school at Bordentown, and later worked in the Patent Office, where

she was instrumental in stamping out fraud; but the development of the incidents and the creation of specific named persons to participate in them were entirely the author's invention. And while the sources refer to Clara's finding former pupils on Civil War battlefields, yet the nature of the incidents and the pupils involved were quite different in Miss DeAcosta's version.

Defendant Beth Brown, a well-known and highly prolific writer of feature columns, short stories, novels, and songs, was also interested in the life of Clara Barton, and wrote an unpublished book biography. *Cosmopolitan Magazine* published extracts from it, which it termed "high-lights from a forthcoming biography," under the style "War Nurse; The Biography of Clara Barton. By Beth Brown."

In compiling this book, Miss Brown copied from Miss DeAcosta's movie script the Tom Maxwell episode, the letter from Clara's brother, the Bordentown school controversy with the same named characters, and the episodes of her remeeting former pupils on the battlefield. Miss Brown did this, assuming that all these events were true, and hence in the public domain, and hence perfectly proper for her to copy, provided only that she did not follow too closely Miss DeAcosta's literary treatment of them.

The sad result of all this was that both Miss Brown and the *Cosmopolitan* were stuck for damages for infringement.

So let me reiterate the advice which I have given in former articles: Don't copy *anything* from an earlier compiler. Instead go to the original sources yourself.

BALANCE

. . . By CLEE WOODS

IN all the vast amount of instruction and advice to writers that I've read I've never seen any special treatment of the subject of balance. And God knows we writers do need balance if we're going to maintain a balance at the First National.

I am acutely aware of balance in every plot I stir together, in every characterization I make, in every situation I attempt to squeeze for all it's worth. I'm constantly thinking of balance on down the line, in motivation, action, word choice, emotional appeal, and dialogue. Any good writer can add more to this list.

By balance for writers I mean simply hitting the exact degree of rightness, without overdoing and without the danger of not doing enough. Take plot. You set your problem. Jam your hero into one hell of a mess. Make it look even worse. What happens to your reader who's staying home nights until his new A coupons come in? He grabs a-holt of his hat and speeds right along with you to see how your hero gets out of that mess. (Notice, I said "to see how your hero gets out," and not—"how you get your hero out." The reader isn't interested in your cleverness *per se*, but in that chief character you've made him like.)

Make your heroine's problem inconsequential, make her trouble petty or trifling, and your "baby sitter" turns to a new story; maybe the next time she goes to the newsstand she'll buy *Love Dreams* instead of your *Woman's Home Journal*. Make your GI Joe worrying solely about the poor quality of goods he gets in his first civvies as he comes home and the 4F who stayed at home won't give a damn what kind of a hero GI Joe has been at the front.

On the other hand, if you overdo, if you spread the trouble on too thick, not even Winnie the welder will believe the tale. She gets disgusted, even bored with the unnaturalness you've handed out. And don't ever forget that you're writing for the reader. Not for your art, which ceases to be art when it gets so arty it fails of its purpose—another place where balance must be observed. Not for the editor, whose sole function is to pick and choose for the entertainment of the man with the dime. Not for your friends, Miss Neophyte, who'll flatter you about your stories quicker than they will about your face. But for the ruler of us all, the reader.

Overdoing plot makes a story unconvincing. Sometimes ridiculous. Too little plot makes the story uninteresting, flabby. Not worth bothering about. Unless you're writing a plotless story. Then you'll want to remember balance in characterization, in selection and elimination, in word choice, in what human qualities to emphasize and what to soft pedal. And finally, you'll want to consider balance in the total impression which you wish to create.

All right now, Woods, get down to business. Tell me just how much is enough and how little is too little. Go to the head of the class, Elmer, for asking me that one. You're a bright boy.

But I'm not bright enough to answer you. I don't think any other writer is, in general terms. That is, nobody can lay down any general rule by which he will be able to say how many cupsful and pinches it takes to make the right dish. It's not like cooking. (I'm glad I thought of the comparison, girls.) If you're making one kind of cake, a slow oven is what you want. If you're preparing Eskimo pie, maybe you'll want quite a different temperature. But in writing, even after you decide upon the specific type of

story, there is no recipe by which to measure for the individual story you'll produce within the type.

That's where you come in. Your individuality and your properly developed sense of balance. It takes judgment, discretion. I think it very often takes a finely attuned sensitiveness of soul. I can't give you any of this. Nobody else can. All I can do is to call your attention to the need of this proper balance in plot and in all these other phases of good writing, and tell you to get in there and pitch.

You can learn a good deal from studying the plots of published stories. Observe how heavy the original problem was, and then how much distress grew out of it before the chief character fought to the top. Decide whether or not the author overdid the plot anywhere. Was the problem of the story too insignificant to hold your personal interest? (Oh, yes, you may dare criticize published stories. Not all of them are perfect., But don't make it too much of a habit to lambaste published stuff. It gets to be a sickness, or sour grapes, anyway.)

In characterization, I don't believe the average beginner is so liable to overdo as he is to neglect, to be lazy or to be crudely obvious. Perhaps his worst fault is the inclination merely to catalog. Just giving a list of garments the gal has on, with color and cost. And forgetting to tell what she does to the garments or what the garments do to her.

By neglect I mean failure of the author to properly conceive a character in the first place; then failure to make the reader see that character the same way through skillful etching in of the dominant traits.

By laziness I mean just what I say: the writer is too lazy to be original in descriptions, so the villain is labelled hatchet-faced, the hero is set forth brilliantly as tall and handsome, the woman of the piece mews like a cat. Just peddling the old wooden types.

By crudity I mean the forthright proclamation, for instance, that Billy Hill hasn't taken a bath for three years, instead of having Doty Delicate tell it merely by opening the car window unobtrusively after Billy is given a lift on a hot summer day.

When characterization is overdone, it usually is in just halting the story while the writer attempts to give a word picture of a character. In effect, the writer then says, "Wait, you want to know what he looks like. Well, here's the guy in full bloom." And so the writer proceeds to lay it on thick, with what he imagines to be some real Harper's-quality work to tell us how the hero looks. If this writer really had studied Harper's, he'd have noticed how very deftly the bits of characterization are slipped in, the way a florist adds a sprig here and a spray there to make a bouquet out of a bunch of plain old daisies picked in the fields.

Nowhere do I ever need to remind myself more often of the desirability for balance than when I'm attempting to follow my practice of squeezing situations for all they're worth. Every good situation I am able to bring into my work immediately lets me know it's there. I feel its force. I know I've got something. So I consciously set about squeezing it dry. I want to make it deliver its full impact upon the reader.

Right there, then, is my caution. How far to go? When have I said enough? Will it stand a little more emotion here? Take another line there to betray the inward suffering of the girl? Come on, Woods, show them how. Say it better! All right.

Instead of saying, "Will it stand a little more emo-

tion here?" why didn't I say, "Should she feel her throat go tight here? If so, how tight?" Inward suffering? Why didn't I say, "Her son, a deserter. Deserter! That pain in her heart—is that the way people die with heart failure? A sharp stab, dragging out. Afraid to try to breathe."

See it? Sure. But should I quit there? Or should I go on and give my reader a bit of the general physiology of the heart and chest? Give him a little of Mother's individual pathology? If you score less than a hundred on those two, you better find out what you're really fitted to do besides write.

Any story may have action, regardless of whether or not it is an action story. Always, then, you're confronted with decisions regarding the action of your story. Even if it is a robust story of action for a pulp, you must be able to determine just how much action the story needs. It must have a certain amount; it can take only so much. Then that sense of balance in you must be the final arbiter.

Let's look at an actual example, not of an action story but of what most likely would be found in a love story. Let's put in too much action. Can you choose the exact spot where the action should have levelled out into something else? Where we had just enough? Or would you eliminate certain action business here and there and keep the rest? If so, how much? Then go on and decide where the action not only is overdone but becomes ludicrous?

Here's part of a plot, from midway the story, let's say: Herb must see Jane before that plane takes off or he's lost her forever. He leaps into his car, steps on it. Then he remembers that he's forgotten a paper vital to convincing Jane that she shouldn't go. Back he races for the paper. Gets it. Seventy an hour. Cops on his tail. About to outrun cops. No, a freight train blocks his way. Must detour three miles, shake off cop and still stop Jane at the airport. Loses cops. Fails to make a corner, sideswipes another car. More cops. Arrest. Frantic pleading. Convinces cops, wins their sympathy. Cops take him to airport, siren shrieking. Wrong airport! Another race across town. God, hold that plane! Makes it. But Jane's not there. Cops grow angry. Take to hoosegow. Bailed out. Back at her home. There's Jane, waiting for him.

One good writer can take this situation, strip it of three-fourths of the action, and make it pull Miss Baby Sitter right out onto the edge of her chair. An-

other good writer might use half or three-fourths of it, tone down parts, play up one or two best spots and make a breathless story of it. So much depends on treatment that we couldn't say arbitrarily what's good and what's not good. To us all, though, the amount of action as given above obviously produces only cheap farce. If I were developing a story from this, I'd certainly eliminate the forgetting of the paper, the freight train, and the sideswiping of the car with resulting second set of cops. Then I'd probably eliminate the wrong airport business and the second race across town.

That leaves us, then, just the first race across town, arrest for speeding, convincing the cops that Jane's worth it all, then his going to hoosegow when Jane's not at the airport. Does that make a story? Certainly not. These are only incidents within a plot step. We haven't shown one solid step in plot structure, unless we tie in Jane's failure to go to the airport with advancement of the story movement.

What was it, then, if not plot or story movement? Why, just action, for suspense. That's why we have to know when we've had enough action in any given spot.

Too much running back and forth and milling around without story movement confuses the reader and delays the story movement until the reader wearies of your tale. And here the distinction between slick and pulp stories is not nearly so marked as it was a dozen years ago. It is clear, of course, that the slicks require greater discrimination in the selection of action that will advance the story. But for any story, restraint must always be used. Lack of restraint, of that proper sense of balance, produces melodrama, slapstick.

That brings us to word choice. In the slicks especially, just a little loss of balance turns a good piece of work into what the rhetorics call "fine writing." If you overdo even the strong, virile words, each good in itself, you sin in the direction of fine writing. How much more then do you sin when you set out deliberately to produce a masterpiece rhetorically, when you ought to be telling your tale with straightforward directness, remembering always that old admonition, "Use the simplest words the subject will bear." You may question that admonition at times, but perhaps in the final analysis you will see that your subject wouldn't bear the simpler word, that your keen sense of balance for just the right word convinces you that the correct shade of meaning lies with the Latin-derived word of five syllables rather than in the single syllable of the Anglo-Saxon. You can learn from the rhetoric the good advice to use the shorter, more familiar words closer akin to our mother tongue, for force and beauty and clarity, but for the effective application of that advice when your thoughts demand an exactness that may reach into Latin and Greek derivatives, you're going to learn to depend more and more upon that cultivated sense of balance, your fine discrimination in word values.

That balance, too, is going to make you careful in your choice of words with respect to timeliness, to mood, to aptness, to your audience. Ernie Pyle, sending back home day by day a faithful, arresting account of an American doughboy slugging it out from foxhole to farmhouse with a crafty, courageous enemy, didn't have to think so much of timeliness and mood in his word choice, because the whole thing was there before him, in him, and he just poured out what he saw, felt, heard, tasted, and smelt. But you, back home safe at a clean, comfortable desk and wholly ignorant of the actual terrific impact of war itself, possibly never to know even remotely what solace there can be in a muddy slit trench, you have to call up all the ingenuity of a schooled craftsman to build mood, timeliness and



"I see the editor had his shoes half-soled!"

fitting effect into what you write of the front line.

That's just an example. The same thing applies to any other writing. The writer who attains strong, powerful effects when that's demanded and who in the next paragraph may take you without your knowing it into a soft, soothing mood, doesn't just happen into such achievements. He's a craftsman. He's developed balance, judgment.

The same goes for emotional appeal in writing. Of all the places where a writer off balance may make himself ridiculous, perhaps in the handling of emotion he will be at his worst. What he writes will be simpering, sentimental, melodramatically absurd. A better writer, given the same situation and the same audience to reach, will get in there and have such a feel for his character, be so much a part of him, that he can't let him overdo his emotion. Yet he can make that character take the reader to any emotional depth or height his story demands. He is constantly aware, though, that just one word too strong or too weak, just one flabby reference to the heart, just one false wave of the flag, may nullify the entire effect sought for.

This sense of balance goes further than your actual writing. You will want to keep it in your choice of what to write about. It will keep you from going off the deep end. It will prevent you from flying at

something too trivial for general public interest merely because it happens to come close home to you.

Still more, the proper balance in your own make-up, Mr. Penn, will keep a restraining hand on you when perhaps you get the urge to have your flings under the license of being a writer. That's all pure rot, and I mean good old Anglo-Saxon rot, the belief that because you're a writer or an artist you have a temperamental nature that must find expression in whiskey, wild women, and whoopee. I know a lot of writers, good ones and mediocre ones and poor ones. The better they are, the more sane, natural and enjoyable lives they lead.

Oh, yes, there's an occasional one who does have his fling. But he doesn't last too long. Burns out. Shoots himself or eventually marries some nitwit widow for the dough her first man left, because she thinks he's worth the price just because he is or *was* a writer.

To sum it all up, every last one of us who pulls down the checks in the writing game, must remember in every story, every paragraph, every word, that there is a fine line of distinction between the good and the poor. Between the superb and the mediocre. The best balance at the First National is maintained by the writer who knows what's enough and what's not enough as it goes down on paper.

||| COME TO YOUR SENSES

. . . By R. E. WOLSELEY



R. E. Wolseley

Any honest teacher of writing techniques must make at least one admission to his students. He must confess that he cannot teach them to write.

If this frankness disconcerts them, however, he can regain their confidence in him—and it will be accompanied by genuine respect—by pointing out that what he *can* do nevertheless is valuable: he can show them what not to do, he can help release literary powers they may not suspect they have, and he can show them

techniques they may not be aware of or could not readily discover for themselves. He also has a negative function of which he says little: he can steer them into what may, for them, be the more logical profession of gardening, cigar-making, or pharmacy.

One of these techniques is the full use of the senses in writing, be it fiction or non-fiction. Certain recent findings by a noted psychologist have made this technique all the more important.

Dr. Robert H. Seashore, Professor of Psychology at Northwestern University, said recently before a scientific group that the popular belief that humans have only five senses is incorrect. We have at least 11 and possibly 13, Dr. Seashore declared.

We have been brought up to believe, for example, that there is a single sense of touch. But Dr. Seashore advances the idea that there are four such senses.

"There are senses of pressure, cold, warmth, and pain, each of which is distinctly separate," he said. "In addition to these are the senses of vision, hearing, smell, taste, kinesthesia or muscular sense, equilibrium,

and the internal organic sense, which transmits sensations such as hunger, thirst, and sex."

What this means to the writer is that the greater his understanding of the play of the senses the more penetrating and convincing his writing will be. This is known, fundamentally, by every dramatist and novelist of note; the gifted author employs the senses in his writing unconsciously. Such ability is a mark of skill, if not genius.

Compare these passages:

"He patted the dead horse where the muzzle of the rifle had burned the hide. He thought how he had held the horse there, with the fire around them, over and around them like a curtain, and had shot him between the eyes and ears. Then, as the horse fell, he had dropped down behind him to get the gun going as they came up the hill."

"He **leaned forward** and patted the dead horse **on the shoulder** where the muzzle of the **automatic** rifle had burned the hide. **He could still smell the burnt hair.** He thought how he had held the horse there, **trembling**, with the fire around them, **whispering and cracking**, over and around them like a curtain, and had **carefully** shot him between the two eyes and the ears. Then as the horse **pitched down** he had dropped down behind his **warm, wet** back to get the gun going as they came up the hill."

The one at the left is the amateur's way of writing; the second shows how Ernest Hemingway did it in "For Whom the Bell Tolls." Look at the boldface words and note how warmth, smell, hearing, muscular sense, equilibrium, and pain all are brought in to these few lines, added to the basic use of the sense of sight.

This same technique has its place in non-fiction, likewise through description. It is a clue to the effectiveness of Ernie Pyle, who is considered one

of the best writers about this war. Analysis of Pyle's style reveals nothing extraordinary, at first. He uses plain language, often resorting to slang and given to triteness. His sentences are simple. His ideas are homely. But he writes with feeling, with understanding, with graphic clarity. A proper use of sense words explains much of his skill. Note this typical paragraph from "Here is Your War":

"Suddenly out of this siesta-like doze the order came. We didn't hear it for it came to the tanks over their radios but we knew it quickly, for all over the desert tanks began roaring and pouring out blue smoke from the cylinders. Then they started off, kicking up dust and clanking in that peculiar 'tank sound' we had all come to know so well. They poured around us, charging forward. They weren't close together—probably a couple of hundred yards apart. They weren't in lines or any specific formation. They were just everywhere. They covered the desert to the right and left, ahead and behind as far as we could see, trailing their eager dust tails behind. It was almost as if some official starter had fired his blank pistol. The battle was on."

How does a writer acquire the ability to use all the senses in his work?

The answer goes back to a fundamental of good journalism and of good literary work at all times: the use of the powers of observation. The writer who is like the three monkeys—they heard not, saw not, spoke not—will be little better than they when he is on the job.

The time to employ the senses is when receiving the impressions from life that make up the scenes used in writing. An author who does not develop the capacity to receive sensory impressions which enable him to note sizes, shapes, colors, sounds, and smells and emotions must take minute notes and must return to the scene he wishes to depict. Often this is impossible or inconvenient.

Nor is this enough. A well-meaning writer may, for example, have the will to observe color or to hear sounds. But suppose he knows so little about colors and sounds that actually he understands almost nothing about what he sees and hears. He will not be able to discern one shade from another if he does not learn color variations. If his ear is not sharp and

if he is a musical ignoramus he will be unable to tell his reader, to take a simple case, if it's the sound of a violin or a violoncello.

Let us see this idea at work in a simple situation, such as might face any beginning writer willing to practice the literary scales for exercises. A novice is assigned to write a description of a store and is encouraged to use as many of the senses as he knows how. He turns in a screed which contains this:

"Along the east wall is the fruit and vegetable section, flanked by some frozen foods and the dairy products. Like an island before these racks is a square affair containing additional supplies of apples and turnips. To the left of the island is a rectangular-shaped collection of shelves offering coffee, eggs, jellies, and other groceries. These cases are five shelves high; the shelves are slanted back slightly to facilitate stacking and to prevent goods from falling to the floor too easily."

When it was pointed out that the writer had produced a flat and ineffective piece of writing and that he had employed only one sense in presenting his description, he visited the scene again and rewrote. The result:

"From the east wall came the pungent, sweet scent of Rome Beauty apples, one of a dozen fruits in green wooden cases ranged side by side along a plateglass window that covered most of the store's northern side. This smell mingled with the acrid odor of several kinds of oranges and with the mustiness of dusty potatoes ranged in unpainted bins beneath the cases. At right angles to these fruits and vegetables was a rectangular case of shelves, five high on each side, about eight feet long and half that wide. Three sizes of eggs, brown and white, in blue and gray cartons, filled one end solidly. From the other came a clue to its contents: the heavy aroma of coffee, which customers were grinding at a sleek black machine beside the cash register."

Hundreds of aspiring authors have improved their writing by just such exercises. Showing them how to do this may not be teaching them to write, for separate techniques, even when mastered, cannot be put together to produce a writer.

But, like water for swimming, it helps.

THE LOVE OF LOVELY WORDS

By MARY CAROLYN DAVIES

The love of lovely words is a very practical thing. You can make money by it. Perhaps your entire living. Many persons have.

When Robert Louis Stevenson said "the love of lovely words," he was speaking as a poet, about poetry. But that same love of the sound of words made his prose better, too. Many fiction writers have a rhythm and beauty in their work that comes from this love of sound. Fanny Hurst has it. Stephen Benet had it, in "The Devil and Daniel Webster," and those other classics.

Many great writers have no feeling for lovely words at all. Dreiser had none. He had huge strength and knowledge and frankness instead. He had other things, too, that not everyone can have. It is rather easier to make fame and money by the love of lovely words.

And think of radio! Only sound counts there! So, let us see what we can do to make money out of loveliness. Because our first duty to our country and the race is to make our own living, to pull our

weight in the boat.

Aside from money, there's giving joy to others, by creating beauty for them, by stringing beautiful syllables together for their delight.

There's a technique to getting money and giving joy from our love of lovely words. There are many techniques. It will take us a lifetime to learn them all. But we might as well be beginning!

There are books and schools that advertise that they will give you a larger vocabulary. What the writer needs is not a larger vocabulary, but a more vivid one, a lovelier one. More breath-taking, startling words, more limpid, melodious words. The singing line, the haunting image, the stirring, lifting, exciting phrase. Not more words, but fewer, better ones. Planned parenthood of words is the proper goal. Not quantity, but quality.

Think in headlines. Write like a telegram.

Freshness, originality, vividness, strength, power, and loveliness. And the greatest of these is loveliness.

LITTLE CHECKS ALONG THE WAY

. . . By HELEN KITCHEN BRANSON

When I was working on a biography, recently completed, I found it necessary to interview hundreds of people connected in one way or another with the social and economic absorption of Negroes who have migrated into West Coast communities.

I might have been appalled at the hours of interviewing necessary, the days and weeks and months of research before my book should be completed and I could anticipate a pay-check—had I not trained myself to pick up many *little* pay-checks along the way.

My interviewing took me into major aircraft factories, introduced me to the intricacies of a Hollywood production, opened wide the doors for me into numerous big industrial plants. I had to dig a heap of dirt to get the few grains of gold necessary for my book, but in my digging I found much minor treasure in the form of magazine articles, specifically those for the trade press.

For instance, my investigation of race problems in industry uncovered a fine feature for *American Druggist*; a summary of these problems in West Coast industrial plants sold to International Labor News Syndicate; news items, biographical sketches, human interest stories, sold to a variety of papers and magazines.

On another occasion, my husband and I were investigating the training of guide dogs used by the blind, for a book-length juvenile we were compiling. We needed facts, live, first-hand, and to get them we went into all kinds of industrial plants, with the result that we obtained side-line material that sold to *Poultry Tribune*, *Trained Men*, *Western Industry*, *American Laundry Digest*, *Barrel and Box and Packages*, *Distribution and Warehousing*, and *Coronet*, as well as numerous items for local papers.

With the exception of the local stuff and the picture feature for *Coronet*, the material was given strictly a trade tailoring. The human interest present was not impaired, but stress was on methods and results. *Barrel and Box and Packages* was instantly interested in the way in which the Army Quartermaster Corps trained and employed with marked success visionless box makers, bale sewers, and carton assemblers: *American Laundry Digest* paid good rates for our stories about deaf mute workers, as well as for one about a blind woman who instituted special placement programs for sightless workers in laundries of New York and California; *Poultry Tribune* liked an illustrated featurette on the contributions the sightless were making in providing frozen chickens and turkeys to the armed forces.

Both *Trained Men* and *Western Industry* were interested in the way many large manufacturing plants were successfully employing visually handicapped people as kick press operators, detail assemblers, template drillers, firing pin inspectors, mica graders, etc. Included in these articles were methods of training, how the guide dogs were handled in the plants, and many other factors involved in the assimilation of blind workmen on a profitable basis.

Yet, never for a moment, did we neglect the original intent of our business—the accumulation of material and stories about guide dogs and their masters.

"But," you may protest, "I am a fiction writer. Why should I fool around with trade journal articles, human interest items and such?" If you have a steady outside income, or are one of those naturally gifted folks who can sell from the very beginning, you don't need the auxiliary funds from such sources. But if you are like me and the hundreds of other people who must work up from the ranks, you appreciate every extra dollar your research can be made to bring in.

Here is an example of the way we hook up fiction with our trade journal writing, or vice versa.

A certain chain clothier in our vicinity had the great misfortune to hire, unknowingly, several clerks who carried on an extortion racket against customers on whom allegedly shoplifted items had been planted.

Naturally, we could not use this shoplifting graft in fact material; but we incorporated it into a mystery yarn that found editorial reception. In order to get a real inside picture of the workings of such stores, we secured an interview with the manager of the shoe department on the basis that we were soliciting trade magazine material for *Boot And Shoe Recorder*. The phonograph record section manager gave us a nice item with pictures for *Record Retailing*, at the same time suggesting (without knowing it) an ingenious method for solving the crime in our mystery novelette. A special promotion for rayon stockings sold to *Department Store Economist*. Description of a bond and check cashing booth sold to *Chain Store Age*, and at the same time, the interview revealed to us just how a large department store handles money, what credentials are required of customers using the payroll check-cashing service, etc. Thus, the background for the detective thriller was laid with authenticity—and the trade press checks filtered in during the composition of the "whodunnit," leaving us free to work on the fiction.

There are many writers who depend on the trade papers for an excellent living. It can be that, too, for the men and women who devote full time and energies to the field. But in addition, it has a great deal to offer every apprentice author. Writing for the trade journals takes you behind the scenes in business and industry; it trains you in concise presentation of facts; it sharpens your ability to slant.

Of course, a writer must know his markets, but that is not difficult: there is a paper covering practically every business in the United States—the shoe store, the neighborhood grocery, the chains, the drug stores, the candy maker, and the coal dealer.

Trade paper editors are among the most helpful in the world. On request, nearly every one will send a sample copy of his magazine to a writer, often with prepared instruction sheets giving requirements, rates, and directions for preparing copy. They welcome queries, replying promptly, and if the article suggested seems a possibility for them, will give detailed instructions regarding treatment and length.

Today, few trade publications pay less than 1 cent a word, many pay 2 cents or higher. Without exception editors want pictures if it is possible to obtain them. Prints of these pictures bought and paid for by a trade journal provide detail for the fiction or non-fiction book writer, that might otherwise be for-

gotten. So, too, tear sheets of the printed articles bring back facts that might not otherwise have been recorded.

It is a wonderful combination—trade journal writing and the heavy research for authorship. I recommend it to all who must earn while they learn.

Names and addresses of markets mentioned:

American Druggist, 572 Madison Ave., New York 22.
American Laundry Digest, 620 Michigan Ave., Chicago 11.
Boot and Shoe Recorder, 100 E. 42nd St., New York 17.

Barrel and Box and Packages, 431 S. Dearborn St., Chicago.
Chain Store Age, 185 Madison Ave., New York 16.
Coronet, 919 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 11.
Department Store Economist, 100 E. 42nd St., New York 17.
Distribution and Warehousing, 100 E. 42nd St., New York 17.
International Labor News Syndicate, Carpenters' Bldg., Washington, D. C.
Poultry Tribune, Mount Morris, Ill.
Record Retailing, Lincoln Bldg., Mount Vernon, New York.
Trained Men, International Correspondence Schools, Scranton, Pa.
Western Industry, 503 Market St., San Francisco 5, Calif.

THE PULPS IN POSTWAR YEARS

By LEO MARGULIES, Editorial Director, Thrilling Group

The war won't be over, even though hostilities cease, so far as the magazine publishers, editors and writers are concerned, until paper restrictions are removed. And when we'll have full untrammelled freedom to print as much as we want is something even Washington can't tell us now.

When this long-awaited day finally arrives, we shall undoubtedly see great expansion in all fields of publishing. Millions of new readers have been acquired during the war years as a result of gas restrictions, personal solitude and soldiers themselves with time off and no place to spend it.

During this war, as during the last, escapist material and grim battle studies have ranged side by side in popular approval. Then we had E. Phillips Oppenheim and Henri Barbusse. Today we have Kathleen Winsor and John Hersey, to name a scant few out of the thousands at work in both fields.

With peace, we can expect a complete swing to the escapist, much as we had a quarter of a century ago when Scott Fitzgerald was leading the parade. Then we began to wonder why we were so escapist: to feel the proddings of national conscience. "Main Street" and Sinclair Lewis stepped in to ride this wave to the crest. Finally, almost a decade later, by the time "All Quiet on the Western Front" came out, we were ready to dig back into the war without flinching.

While the pulp-paper magazines are first, last and always escapist, no matter how grimly they seek to hide their flight from reality under a grim exterior, they have followed and will, to a certain degree, continue to follow these trends. And since human reaction patterns vary little, we can expect something pretty close to what happened before. Already the well-known hand-set typing is on the wall.

The war-air magazines are a case in point. They had been going rather well for twenty years. By 1943, this peak was past. True stories of heroism and narrow escapes and flaming battles were breaking in the newspapers daily. Fiction writers, no matter how adroit, could not hope to compete with what was happening around them all over the world. And now these magazines hardly dot the stands.

The love story should boom. Denied a chance for real-life romance in too many cases, young women and girls are turning to vicarious thrills—just as air-minded kids, unable to get aloft in real planes, sought satisfaction in the air-war books until they could get the genuine article. Escapism, by its very title, is flight to something you haven't got. And there'll be lots of catching up on love when the boys come marching home.

Because of restricted opportunities for many of these boys—no matter what Congress promises—watch science-fiction magazines, with their suggestions of new frontiers to conquer, boom after the

war. Watch detective stories rise to new heights. Men trained to violence and then denied it, will seek it vicariously in front of the fire or on the porch hammock Sunday afternoons.

It is probable that adventure stories, now pretty much in abeyance, thanks to real-life thrillers going on all over the world, will be a little slower on the pick-up. They'll continue to be pretty close to home for a good many million men and women for some time to come. What were once exotic backgrounds, will represent nasty living conditions, strange bugs and warm beer if any. But let a thin layer of nostalgia be laid over grim reality, let the kids who know daddy spent a year in the CBI Theater grow up and want to read about it—and see them spurt. The ultimate reaction should hit an historic high.

Westerns and sports, those hardy perennials, will continue to go along, relatively, at much their present pace. The Western, usually a semi-costume story of sixty to eighty years ago, is already safely nostalgic. If these stories aren't much like current conditions in the cow country, readers gobble them with relish and imagine them indicative of the so-called Old West.

Sports will probably hit a somewhat higher level of sales as the postwar sports boom sweeps the country. But this will be more a matter of current interest than of escapist fever.

It all adds up to steady markets for the writer—fairly good rates and a chance to buy that farm in Connecticut or that ranch in Arizona.

These are my guesses as to what the future holds. Some of them probably, almost certainly, will turn up a double zero on the wheel of time to come. But I'll give odds that the bulk of them come true.

□ □ □ □

THE DEBIT SIDE

By WILLIAM W. PRATT

He didn't know a poet fails
 Who doesn't learn the ropes,
 So every day he jammed the mails
 With bulging envelopes.
 His meter lagged, but hand was quick;
 Ideas fairly flowed,
 And timepiece urged with every tick:
 An ode, an ode, an ode.

His portable was exercised
 Till parts began to burn,
 But never once was he surprised
 With payment in return.
 With each incoming mail he found
 Another wasted load,
 And when a year had rolled around
 He owed, and owed, and owed.

||| LET'S NOT BE TOO TOPICAL

. . . By A. BOYD CORRELL

I haven't been topical in six years, and at the end of those six years of writing I haven't got a dud. My writing is mediocre—formula stuff which compares with that of most of the other detective-crime-action short-story writers. It just happens that I saw the light, and wrote stories that could keep on going out; going out to new editors of old magazines, or old magazines with new policies.

I sold the first story I ever wrote five years after I wrote it. The second story I wrote I sold on the first trip out. Yet any story of mine that has been published during these six years could be published today and still be up to date. There, I think, is the formula for keeping duds to a minimum.

You know, or should know, that magazines are made up months in advance. The editor buys just so many stories to make up his immediate schedule and bounces the rest—unless he thinks they are exceptionally good and not topical in the sense of being keyed to something that will be stale when they can be printed. These he feels safe to buy and stick away in his safe, knowing he can use them six months or two years hence.

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Leo Margulies bought a story from me in May, 1942, and brought it out in the 1944 fall issue of *Thrilling Mystery*. I remember writing that story, and I recall being tempted to mention Guadalcanal, coffee rationing, and other things topical in 1942 but out of the picture now. Another story which I sold in 1941 to *Flynn's Detective Fiction Weekly*, when that famous book belonged to Munsey, was published in the November 1943 issue of *New Detective* after Munsey sold its titles to Popular Publications, along with a safe-full of unpublished manuscripts.

Daisy Bacon, one of the kindest editors of them all, bought two of my latest yarns a few months ago, saying that her schedule was full and she had a very large number of scripts on hand for *Detective Story Magazine*, but she liked these and was buying them anyway. Do you think she would have bought them if they had been topical and liable to be outdated within a few months? You bet your last dollar she wouldn't!

So pass up that hot story based upon the current news about Iwo Jima, or the Bonins, or make your locale general—some place in the far Pacific. The B-29 is pretty new, but one must be careful not to write of it as the *latest* bomber. Already contracts are let for bombers one-half again as large as the B-29 and the B-32, which may force the present giant Super-Fortresses into the background by the time your story would reach print. If you must refer to current events, *date* them. It's simple to do, once you get the habit.

I remember a story I did some years ago. The hero was a young fellow of 18 whose father had been killed fighting for China in the A.V.G. At that time the American Volunteer Group had just been disbanded, and its deeds were on everyone's tongue. But when I wrote the story, I referred to his father having been killed while serving "in the now long disbanded A.V.G." That dated it safely, and the story was good for as long as I needed to submit it until it sold. Three months could be a "long" time as well as six years.

If you keep this in mind you won't need to say,

on completing a yarn, "This story must sell promptly because it's about the war, and peace may come very soon." That's obviously wrong, as a little thought should show you. If the story is handled right, its salability will last because it isn't presented as an immediately topical piece, but as covering things readers will remember. This is proven by the fact that the best stories about the first World War appeared after the Armistice, and in many cases long after. Nobody would argue that a good yarn about the Civil War stood no chance nowadays because it wasn't published while that war was still going on. We see stories about that historic conflict in the magazines continually, and in book form. Soon after the invasion of Normandy, there was a story in the *Post* about a Norman baron and his Saxon cerfs in the days following the Battle of Hastings in 1066! This shows that a very old war is still good in fiction if the fiction is well done. Study the handling of such stories by their authors and compare it with your story which "must sell promptly because it's topical."

Stories about the fighting now going on abroad and the human-interest home-front problems, similar in content to those yarns which inexperienced writers are saying they must sell soon or never, will be printed for generations after they are dead, just as Civil War stories are. I can imagine an outstanding yarn about the 1944 presidential election appearing in a magazine fifty or a hundred years hence, its main idea being that the victory of Roosevelt had proved to be a turning point in the subsequent course of world events—for good or ill. There have been plenty of similar stories and plays about Lincoln.

As for murder mystery shorts and novels, the administration of the law against murder goes on in wartime just as it does in peacetime, so it isn't necessary to apologize for your detective hero because he isn't in the Army, thereby badly dating your story for peacetime submission or future reprint rights. After all, we still need cops. If he hasn't enlisted or been drafted, presumably it's because Uncle Sam wants him where he is. Remember that Uncle does the choosing.

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Think straight about so-called "timeliness," too often a delusion and a snare. Distinguish clearly between what may *still* be timely months or years hence, being something that will last in its popular interest, and what will be stale pretty soon because it is mistakenly keyed too closely to the day's news—to the latest big happening, presented by you as fresh, which will speedily be dated by the inescapable fact that it is only one of many happenings in this swiftly-moving drama of worldwide tragedy.

For example, a story about the horrors of coffee rationing and the sufferings of a coffee fiend under it would be obviously dated, as coffee rationing is a thing of the past. The current shortage of cigarettes offers the same pitfall. But a fine story about an American soldier, gambling for victory or death on the Anzio beach-head or anywhere else, or one about his girl at home, would be equally good for ever, or for as long as you need consider. Why? Because it is a lasting part of the never-ending drama of humanity. It is linked to what the author of a beloved Christmas carol called "the hopes and fears of all the years."

THE STUDENT WRITER

CONDUCTED BY WILLARD E. HAWKINS

LXXII—CRIME FICTION FORMULAS

(2) Deduction with Menace

In order to augment the suspense and emotional grip of the detective story, latter-day authors have introduced an added factor to supplement the intellectual puzzle involved in the average "whodunit." This is the factor of *menace*. Not only is the detective faced with the problem of solving the case and exposing the criminal—he must also surmount actual danger—the threat of death to himself and other sympathetic characters.

This is a logical development. No matter how intrinsically fascinating an incident may be, the interest takes on new zest if it involves us personally—or if it involves some one in whom we have a personal interest—even if only a story character.

In the detective-menace story, the criminal is not content to cover his tracks and wait while the detective sorts out various clues leading to a solution of the case. He takes active measures to thwart the investigation, including the obvious measure of trying to kill any one who learns—or attempts to learn—facts pointing toward a solution.

Skillful writers manage to achieve an atmosphere of menace by subtle and not easily defined means—through effects of style, atmosphere, characterization, and mood. More obvious measures usually are employed by writers in the pulp field. A crude but familiar method of informing the reader that the detective faces deadly menace is to have an attempt made upon his life. A shot from ambush notifies all concerned that the investigator has tangled with a deadly opponent who will stop at nothing.

In a considerable number of instances—especially in more juvenile types—the deductive features are overshadowed by menace to such an extent that the narrative becomes an adventure story rather than a detective yarn. It consists of a series of encounters between the detective and ruthless criminals—of hair-breadth escapes, gunfights, and the like.

Typical examples of deduction with menace, from the detective action magazines, follow:

PRIVILEGED TO KILL. (J. Lane Linklater in *Thrilling Detective*, April, 1944.)

Ed Masson, unjustly demoted investigator for the district attorney's office, finds the murdered body of Herb Stevens in a cottage. Investigating the murder, Masson becomes convinced that it was instigated by Councilman Paul Clinton because Stevens knew too much concerning the councilman's crooked deals. Clinton gives him a veiled warning not to become too curious. Masson learns that Ed Nichols, collection agent, has been trying to collect a bill from Stevens. Nichols denies any knowledge of the murder, but Masson notices that Nichols' hat is spotted. A sprinkler in the yard next to the cottage where Stevens was murdered was throwing water in such a way that any one entering the back door would have to pass under it. From this clue, Masson deduces that Nichols must have entered the house—was probably the murderer. He convinces Nichols by a faked telephone call that Clinton intends to betray him. Enraged, Nichols attempts to kill Clinton, but the latter is quicker with a gun. On Nichols' body, police find incriminating evidence

against Clinton. Clinton is about to kill the police Captain when Masson shoots him, saving the Captain's life. The evidence against Clinton incidentally clears Masson of the charge for which he was demoted, and he is restored to favor on the D. A.'s staff.

Not clearly apparent from this brief synopsis is the fact that Masson was in jeopardy from the start, being opposed by a crooked politician who would stop at nothing. The deductive angle is much subordinated to physical conflict, gun fights, and similar incidents involving the daring and determination of the hero.

TOO MANY SUSPECTS. (Joseph C. Stacy in *Detective Story*, December, 1944.)

Detective Lee is induced by Mary Allentowne to investigate the death of her wealthy aunt, who allegedly committed suicide. Lee is convinced that she was murdered. Several members of her family, as well as servants, might have had motives and opportunities for the deed. An attempt is made on the lives of Mary and Lee, showing that the killer is desperate. A maid is murdered, presumably because she threatened his safety. By picking holes in his alibi and figuring out probable motives, Lee concludes that Mrs. Wentworth's son, Phillip (a fairly obvious suspect) committed the murders. He charges him with the crimes, the motive being that his mother had discovered his forgery of her name on a check for a large sum, and that the maid knew too much. Phillip first denies, then tries to fight his way to freedom. He is shot, confessing his guilt before he dies.

In this yarn, the deduction consists largely of jumping at conclusions. That there is a murderer at large is proved chiefly by the menace angle—the attempt on the lives of the detective and Mary—the murder of the maid.

THE RUBBER KNIFE MURDERS. (Book-length mystery novel by Robert Wallace in *Phantom Detective*, April, 1944.)

Richard Curtis Van Loan, the "Phantom Detective," is a "superman" variety of the purely fictional dilettante detective, who solves crimes as a hobby. In real life a "handsome, wealthy playboy," he is a master of disguise, able to make himself look and act like any one he chooses to impersonate. Although he occasionally employs deductive methods, the story usually centers around his daring escapes, fights against desperate odds, and thrilling action.

The murder of Henderson, who has been stabbed with a rubber knife which was apparently incapable of inflicting any injury, starts the Phantom on his investigation. There are additional rubber knife murders. Van Loan, appearing in many disguises, gradually runs to earth a gang of criminals who are involved in a complicated intrigue running the gamut of sabotage by Nazis and Japanese, to gangsterism and racketeering. Van Loan is many times trapped and captured (despite his vaunted keenness of wit) but always manages to escape. For example, after a desperate battle, he and his newspaper friend Huston capture a fishing smack from gangsters. A trailing Nazi submarine attacks the smack, is about to sink it; but the Phantom, with Huston's help, pours the vessel's cargo of oil on the water, sets it on fire, and the two make their escape when the submarine is forced to submerge.

Again: After a wild chase, the Phantom plunges into an isolated house after a gangster. A gun battle in the dark ends with the Phantom finding himself locked in an impregnable room. The house is set on fire—the room bursts into flames. There are no windows, the door is made of steel

—there is no means of escape from the inferno. . . . Except, of course, for the resourceful Phantom. He discovers a bottle on a bench. Providentially, it contains Aqua Regia, "one of the strongest of all corrosives." He pours the acid into the door lock. Before the fire can burn him to a crisp or the smoke suffocate him, the acid eats through the lock—and once again the Phantom escapes certain death.

He rounds up the criminals—at least, all those who have survived the numerous gun fights—and solves the mystery of the rubber knives. Their effectiveness as weapons, of course, is explained by a temporary freezing of chemically treated rubber.

The formula for this type of story consists of providing a framework of intrigue which will serve as the background for a series of heinous crimes and allow the hero-investigator to get into and out of one scrape after another in his relentless effort to run down and expose the criminals. The small amount of deduction involved is secondary to the action-conflict.

MURDER TROUPE. (Roger Torrey in *Detective Story*, December, 1944.)

Honvak, member of a traveling theatrical company, is murdered, apparently for \$80,000 worth of diamonds he carries with him. Connell, under guise of being a member of the troupe, has been hired as a detective or "trouble shooter." His investigation of the case leads to various complications. A second member of the company, Willy Andrews, is killed, presumably by some one who thought he had the diamonds. Minerva, a member of the company, bestows her favors on Connell and provides him with numerous clues. "Planted" diamonds from the loot are found by police on several members of the company, further confusing the case. Several attempts to kill Connell are made during the investigation—he knows the murderer (or murderers) will stop at nothing to avoid detection. At the climax, he surprises Minerva and an apparent accomplice removing the jewels from a hiding place. Minerva is about to kill the accomplice when Connell intervenes. She turns on him, but he shoots her in the ankle, frustrating her attempt to kill him. Her confession indicts her as the original murderer and jewel thief. She is probably the most unlikely suspect, since the detective has been enjoying amorous interludes with her throughout the investigation. The murder of Andrews is revealed to have been committed by another member of the troupe, who thought Andrews had the jewels.

Deduction, from clues accumulated by the investigator, is largely responsible for the solution of this case, but the clues result to a large extent from

the action, which involves menace directed not only toward the investigator but toward all members of the theatrical company.

FOOTPRINTS OF DEATH. (James P. Webb in *Detective Story*, December, 1944.)

Detective Sam Cloud obtains leave of absence to investigate the murder charge against his brother, Ben, who is accused of killing Violet Parson. Circumstantial evidence shows that Violet and her fiancé, Charley Tudor, left Overholt's hunting lodge together. Her body was found next morning in Ben's woodshed, his knife sticking in it and his footprints leading through the snow to the shed and back to the house. Ben took a drink before leaving the hunting lodge, where he was also a guest, and remembers nothing. Tudor claims Violet left him, went to Ben's cabin, and was killed. Cloud questions suspects, examines tracks, etc. As he gets warm on the trail, he is shot at from ambush. He finally corners Tudor when the latter steals into the cabin at night to murder him. He pins the murder on Tudor by noting that when Ben ties his shoes, he uses a different type of knot than that used by Tudor. When first interviewed, Ben's shoes were tied with Tudor's characteristic knot, revealing that the latter had taken off Ben's shoes in order to carry the murdered girl out to the woodshed, then returned them to the feet of the man whose liquor he had drugged.

This could have been told as a straight deduction story, but its interest is no doubt enhanced by the personal interest of the detective in the suspected man, and by the attempts against the detective's life.

MURDER WORE A SEALSKIN COAT. (Jay Karth in *Crack Detective*, May, 1944.)

Sent as an investigator to a lonely outpost on one of the Aleutian Islands, John Lawton finds an air of mystery and menace from the start. His predecessor, Joe Patrick, sent to investigate a shortage in the fur seal pack, was reported dead. Lawton suspects that he was murdered. Lawton's bag is stolen and he is slugged in the dark. Suspicion points to various persons: Hungerford, superintendent; Sanders, chief radioman; Dr. Mason. An arrow is shot at Lawton from ambush. He discovers a hidden radio apparatus. Hungerford is found murdered. Lawton investigates an Indian village and there finds his predecessor, Patrick, a dying prisoner. He is surprised by Sanders who, after boasting of the murder of Hungerford and Patrick, shoots Lawton and leaves him for dead. Lawton recovers, trails Sanders to a secret hideout, and shoots it out with him. He learns that Sanders has been directing a Japanese pirate boat by radio, and insures its capture. The object of the crime apparently was to secure possession of a mythical buried treasure supposed to be in Hungerford's hands.

The menace angle is predominant, Lawton's predecessor having already been done away with in some mysterious fashion when he arrives and various attempts being made to thwart and kill him. The chief effort of the criminal is to kill others who seem likely to interfere before he can locate and abscond with the supposed treasure.

Further examples of "Deduction with Menace" will be reviewed in next month's installment.

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Western Trails and *Western Aces*, 67 W. 44th St., New York 18, require that all stories be of the timeless West, and that all be written from the man's point of view. "Although our editorial policy is fairly flexible," states Ruth M. Dreyer, editor, "we do not use stories with an historical background. This also applies to yarns of the modern West, and to off-trail stories."

My Baby, 1 E. 53rd St., New York, is a limited market for practical articles that will help other parents of young children, from infancy up to six years of age. "We have a strong aversion to starchy and sentimental chatter about babies," writes Gertrude Warburton, editor. "We like simple, direct, and helpful articles." No layman-written articles are accepted on child psychology, nutrition, pediatrics, etc.



"I thought you said you wanted to see my shorts!"

LITERARY

MARKET TIPS

Our New York correspondent writes: "*Mind Digest*, York, Pa., is paying promptly. I have investigated them and found them financially sound. . . . The two love pulps in Popular Publications are entirely separate . . . at least, one reading doesn't include the other. Thus, a manuscript submitted to Miss Ollie Redpath of *Love Book Magazine* might later be sent to Miss Peggy Graves of *Love Novels*.

. . . If you can write stories appealing to the woman of the home who likes to read stories with other than a war background, you have a good chance with Miss Joan Ransom of *Everywoman's*. That's the kind of story she is looking for! . . . Edward Dodd of Dodd, Mead & Co., is back from Washington and looking for good books. R. T. Bond is running the Dodd, Mead Red Badge contest. . . . Robert Speller is still looking for good juvenile books. He has changed his address to Box 156, Eatontown, N. J. Query before submitting. . . . *Swank* (see Market Tip on this) complains that most of the material coming in is not sophisticated enough. *Esquire* requirements apply.

. . . Stories must have warmth, as well as a good idea, to please John K. McCaffery, fiction editor of *American Magazine*. Feeling and plot are essential, but not drippy sentiment. . . . *Argosy* is paying \$10 for each short mystic experience published. Must be true and of metaphysical nature. . . . Writers interested in television, and capable of writing on the subject, should contact Mildred Steffens, 47 W. 87th St., editorial director of *Telescreen*, a magazine which has had only limited subscription sale for the past year, but which will be popularized for general sale soon. . . . *Horse Feathers*, Portland, Ore., has had paper trouble which has delayed recent issues, and resulted in a stock of material. . . . *Embers Magazine*, Batavia, N. Y., runs some short prose as well as verse. I have always found Ted Snell, editor, fine to deal with. . . . While the post-war scene is preferred, the Pacific scene can get by with powerful human interest, in all magazines. . . . A leading New York editor made this comment: 'I believe every new writer would improve his chances 100 per cent if he would cut everything he writes 25%.' He also added: 'When an author writes more than a half page letter to accompany his manuscript, I automatically shy away. His story is bound to be long-winded, too.' I've heard agents say the same thing. Editors are favoring the 2500-word story, especially if it is the work of a new writer. Both pulp and slick editors reach quickly for these short ones, often read them ahead of the longer ones. . . . Another editorial comment is interesting: 'The man who hopes to write a novel some day, but believes he must first get a name for short material in a good magazine, is fooling himself. If he is a novelist, he should start as one. He belongs to a different clan of cats entirely than the short-story writer. A sprinter cannot make a marathon runner—and one born for long running can never make good as a sprinter. It just ain't natural.'

Maelstrom, Renuart Arcade, Coral Gables 34, Fla., announces a change in rates to 5 cents a word on acceptance.

Extension, the National Catholic Monthly, 360 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 1, Eileen O'Hayer, associate editor, announces the following new rates: Short stories, regular length, \$100, absolute minimum; short-shorts, 1000 to 1500 words, \$75, absolute minimum; vignettes, 500 to 1000 words, \$25 absolute minimum; articles, regular length, \$100, absolute minimum; short articles, \$75, absolute minimum; vignettes, \$25 and up; poetry 8 to 30 lines, \$8 minimum, and gag cartoons, \$25 minimum. "Please note," explains Miss O'Hayer, "that these are absolute minimum rates. We pay as high as \$300 for short stories and short articles, depending on quality, name, etc., and make special prices on six-part serials. We intend to raise our rates even higher just as quickly as possible."

The Span, 4036 N. 11th St., St. Louis 7, Mo., a bi-monthly published six times a year, desires articles on social themes, science, religion, labor, racial problems, education, politics, well written analyses, lively and timely, in relation to the world tomorrow, from 1000 to 2000 words; short stories of same length, of social significance; literary criticism, 1000 to 2000 words, and poetry of social value, rhymed or free, preferably under 32 lines, but occasionally up to 60 lines. No payment is made, but there are annual awards totalling \$150.

Contributions to *Destinies*, the magazine of creative brotherhood, edited by Dion O'Donnol, should no longer be addressed to Box 1005, Reno, Nevada. This is now the address of the Reno Poetry Workshop, a poetry club organized in 1943 by F. Bruce, who was formerly connected with *Destinies*. "The last record I had of *Destinies* was Box 68, Camino, Calif."

Bookbinding and Book Production, Guardian Life Bldg., 50 Union Square, New York, Ranald Savery, editor, writes that it is inaugurating a slightly different arrangement in dealing with correspondents. "Instead of paying on publication, as heretofore, we shall now pay on acceptance. As soon as the manuscripts come to my desk, and the decision is made, correspondents will be notified, and a check sent. This means that routine coverage of meetings, Guild and Clinic sessions, etc., will go through automatically, along with news items. Special features, if accepted, even if laid aside for future publication, will be paid for immediately."

The Retail Tobacconist, 1860 Broadway, New York, is now being edited by Arnold Gisnet, who is in the market for illustrated business-building articles based on interviews with successful retail tobacco merchants.

Miles Publishing Co., 404 Halliburton Bldg., Los Angeles 14, announces that it will be glad to consider manuscripts of all types, with the exception of poetry, short story collections, and fantasy. Special needs include self-help or instructional books, and other non-fiction. Payment is on royalty basis or outright purchase. All material should be addressed to Miss Barbara McCourt, formerly with MGM Studios, who has been appointed editor of the Miles Publishing Co. Walter O. Miles, publisher, promises report on all material within three weeks.

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Real Story and Real Romances, 1476 Broadway, New York, are both edited by Mary Rollins who writes, "I'd be very glad to read, criticize, and make suggestions on plot outlines." She suggests that authors study recent issues of these magazines for the type of yarns currently in favor.

Glamour, 420 Lexington Ave., New York, edited by Elizabeth Penrose, suggests as the most likely subjects of appeal, love, humor, and unusual career stories, good personality pieces, manuscripts of an educational nature, such as politics, world affairs, social problems. "All manuscripts," warns Miss Penrose, "should be geared to a young, female audience, however, and we demand quality writing."

Electric Appliance Journal, 510 RKO Bldg., 1270 6th Ave., New York, is offering 2 cents a word on publication, \$2.50 per print for action pictures, for material covering the servicing of radio sets, the merchandising of records, the development of postwar plans, by electric appliance dealers, and for factual articles based on the actual business experience of an electric appliance dealer who has worked out his own solution for some business problem.

American Business, 4660 Ravenswood Ave., Chicago 5, suggests the following topics for articles: "What the War Taught Us About Office Organization," based on an interview with some executive in a well-equipped office, where more work is now being done, with fewer people, because of modernized office methods, including new machines and systems; "What Our Research Department Means to Us," an interview with a responsible executive of a company developing new products through research, telling how its research has solved problems; "War-time Changes That Proved Useful," based on an interview with a management executive regarding emergency measures taken because of manpower shortages, or because of material restrictions, which he hopes will become permanent and standard practice; "What We Learned from Sales Analysis," based on an interview with some executive officer of a company telling what was learned when the company made a careful analysis of sales, or what it is doing today to set up proper records for sales analyses, sales control, etc.; "What Expenses Can Be Cut," based on an interview with any type of responsible executive in a good company, showing how expenses are being cut or more carefully controlled, and "How to Cut Order Handling Costs," based on the experience of a named company in simplifying and thus reducing costs of order handling. Eugene Whitmore, editor, pays good rates on acceptance, and is buying more outside material than ever before because of wartime scarcities.

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The Progressive Farmer, Raleigh, N. C., runs in each issue a Young Southerners Department, material for which is mostly furnished by young Southerners themselves. "However," writes Wm. C. LaRue, assistant editor, "we do purchase such articles as are suitable for this department. We would be interested in receiving well dramatized articles on nature or science with good human interest suitable for young people aged 10 to 20. We like to use good clear pictures and illustrations connected with this material. The rate paid for work published depends upon the nature of the contribution. Also, we have found some demand for good original puzzles, jokes, and humorous articles. All of these materials must necessarily be very brief and condensed in order to conform with our limited space."

Swank, 33 W. 42nd St., New York 18, is a revival of the magazine of that name that was discontinued a few years ago. The new *Swank*, edited by Charles Lam Markmann, is seeking articles and fiction of 2000 words, verses, cartoons, and picture stories, all with appeal to the intelligent male in the professional or businessman's class. Style must be entertaining, smart, swift-moving. Rates announced are 3 cents a word for articles, 5 cents a word for fiction, 50 cents a line for verse, \$25 a page for picture stories, and \$25 for a quarter-page cartoon, \$35 for a half-page, and \$50 for a full-page.

Chicago Times Syndicate, 211 W. Wacker Dr., Chicago, is, according to Wilma Kinzie, assistant to Russ Stewart, general manager, always interested in new feature ideas, particularly those with attractive art. "With newsprint quotas at a new low, a feature has to be really 'tops' to sell now. Yet there is a great dearth of genuine humor in strips and panels. All current reader surveys indicate the growing public taste for *funny* funnies."

True Story, 205 E. 42nd St., New York 17, requires all stories to have themes based on current everyday problems—simple problems dealing with simple everyday people. Says Hilda Wright, "A fiction writer could possibly make a selection of what we want in story material by studying the current issues of our magazine plus a study of current everyday problems."

Simon and Schuster, 1230 6th Ave., New York 20, has announced a new publishing department devoted to the discovery, publication, and promotion of new and outstanding talent. It will be known as the Venture Press. A book selected to bear the twin imprint must be a first one, and must, in the opinion of the editors, have literary distinction. All such books will be intensively promoted and advertised, both as a group and individually. In this way, the publishing house hopes to aid the authors of Venture books to become firmly established.

Louise Pannullo-Parnofello, president of the Friendly Voice Poetry Society which solicited membership in our February issue, announces that the daily radio program which had been broadcast for a period of nine months has been discontinued to make way for a sponsored program, with the result that the Society, which she organized in conjunction with the program, has also been temporarily discontinued. It is hoped a spot on the air will be found for the program soon, but until that time, the function of the Society will rest.

Blue Book, 230 Park Ave., New York, the magazine containing "stories for men by men," is continuing to pay \$25 for each letter accepted for either of its two departments, "My Most Amusing Experience," and "What Do You Think?" The author's full name and address must accompany the letters, but if he prefers, initials only may be used for publication.

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Esquire, 919 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago 11, Arnold Gingrich, editor, writes: "We don't actually pay by the word for scripts, and payment varies according to quality as well as length. In general, our word rate amounts to around 10 cents a word; payment for a story or article is usually \$100 and up."

Parents' Magazine, 52 Vanderbilt Ave., New York, pays \$5 on publication for short accounts of problems with teen-age youngsters and their solutions (250 words or less) but does not return unavailable manuscripts submitted for this department of parental problems. Mrs. Clara Savage Littledale is editor.

Lariat Story Magazine, 670 5th Ave., New York 19, Jack O'Sullivan, editor, gives this advice for acceptable material: "Avoid the prosaic whenever possible. Wrap your story around some vibrant personality, but don't limit your hero or heroine to the law-and-order group. A rampaging she-maverick or a ruthless Owlhoot leader often proves a more spicy dish. Detail your gun-action scenes but remain logical. Lusty romance interest is important, particularly in novel-length yarns, and do not refrain from giving the girl a significant role."

Latest report on *The Bostonian Magazine*, 71 Newbury St., Boston 16, is that the entire old editorial staff has resigned. New staff consists of Lester Nash, E. E. Leader, and Miss Barbara Pearson. It has been suggested by a former staff member that all contributors who have not been paid for material used send a strong letter of complaint to Mr. Nash, with carbons to Mr. Leader and Miss Pearson. The new corporation, it is claimed, has disallowed claims for work published before the first of the year.

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PRIZE CONTESTS

Reynal & Hitchcock, which recently established a children's book department, announces a "Youth Today" Contest providing a \$3500 award for the most sensitive, realistic treatment of some aspect of contemporary American life and youth problems, either fiction or non-fiction. Story and interest to young readers will be the first consideration of the judges in awarding the prize; the underlying theme, while secondary, must be vivid and must be concerned with plausible situations. The book may be designed for any group of ages between 8 and 18. The contest will close February 1, 1946, and will be open to all authors whether previously published or not, according to Helen Hoke, director of the department. The prize will be divided into an outright award of \$2000 added to \$1500, which will be regarded as an advance against normal royalty rates. (Publisher's press release does not state whether contest has, or has not, a fire-escape clause. Writers should write for a copy of the offer with rules. Address "Youth Today" Contest, Reynal and Hitchcock, Inc., 386 4th Ave., New York 16.)

Poets interested in contests might query Mrs. P. N. Strong, chairman, Poetry Society of Georgia, Vernon View, Savannah, Ga., regarding the Society's 1945 contest (not 1925 as appeared in the January Verse Market List!)

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Story, 432 4th Ave., New York, announces its 12th Annual College Short Story Contest open to all registered students of colleges and universities in the United States. Stories submitted must be not less than 1500 nor more than 7000 words in length, and each entry must be certified by a member of the faculty of the institution. No college or university may submit more than two entries. The submitted stories are to represent the best selection by qualified judges of the work of students of the school year 1945. First prize will be \$100, plus publication of the story in *Story*.

Moody Press, 153 Institute Place, Chicago 10, is sponsoring, through the generosity of a friend, a Distinguished Christian Fiction Contest, with awards totaling \$1750 in addition to royalties, offered for the three best manuscripts submitted before December 31, 1945, according to an announcement by Dr. Will H. Houghton, president. First prize is \$1000; second prize, \$500, and third prize, \$250, all in addition to royalties. All manuscripts submitted during the contest will be considered for publication by the Moody Press at regular royalty rates, according to Don Norman, director. Aim of the Distinguished Christian Fiction Awards is to maintain at a high level the standards of writing in this field. New writers will be welcomed and will compete with veterans in the field solely on the basis of merit. All residents of the United States and Canada, including men and women at present overseas in the service of their country, are eligible, with the exception of Moody Bible Institute employees. Manuscripts should be full book-length fiction, containing a minimum of 60,000 words and a maximum of 200,000, and should reflect the evangelical point of view, with reference to separated living (that is, consistent Christian living), and any doctrinal points discussed. For complete rules and entry blanks, write Distinguished Christian Fiction Awards, in care of the Moody Press.

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Julian Messner, Inc., 8 W. 40th St., New York 18, is offering a prize of \$3000 for the book it considers best in promoting racial or religious tolerance in America. The manuscript may be in any form—fiction, biography, poetry, even an essay, or photographs, or an historic, or a scientific work—so long as it promotes racial or religious tolerance. The contest is open to anybody anywhere. Closing date is January 1, 1946.

The Dierkes Press, publishers of *Living Poetry Quarterly*, 153 Garden St., La Porte, Ind., announces another book publication contest in the field of poetry. The contest will open March 15, 1945, and close October 1, 1945. Contest rules may be obtained by writing The Dierkes Press. (Incidentally, The Dierkes Press publishes books only on a royalty basis.)

Farm Journal & Farmer's Wife, Washington Square, Philadelphia 5, has increased its monthly prizes for "Letters from Farm Women" to \$5 for each letter printed, and a \$25 war bond for the letter voted best by readers.

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ANNUAL SYNDICATE LIST

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